

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAM-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10 SAJ-01 OMB-01 CIEP-01 EB-07

TRSE-00 AEC-05 ACDA-05 AGR-05 CU-02 /095 W

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R 171000Z JAN 75

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 832

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

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TAGS: PINT, SP

SUBJ: PREMIER'S NEW YEAR'S PRESS INTERVIEW

REF: A. MADRID 7568

B. MADRID 5670

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: IN PRESS INTERVIEW WITH "ABC" JAN 12, PREMIER ARIAS NAVARRO SAID SPAIN NEEDED "UNITY-- AND IMPROVEMENT OF ITS STRUCTURES". HE DESCRIBED RECENTLY ADOPTED STATUTE ON ASSOCIATIONS AS A FIRST STEP IN WHAT SHOULD BE A LONG COURSE IN POLITICAL CHANGES. HE DESCRIBED FRANCO'S HEALTH AS NORMAL AND GOOD FOR MAN OF 82 YEARS, NOTING THAT CAUDILLO MAINTAINED "EXTRAORDINARY MENTAL LUCIDITY" IN COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETINGS. HE CREDITED PRINCE JUAN CARLOS WITH EXCEPTIONAL MEMORY AND INTELLIGENCE COMPARABLE TO FRANCO'S. ON POLITICAL ISSUES
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HE SAID EUROPE WAS CONFRONTED WITH GRAVE ECONOMIC

CRISIS, COMPOUNDED BY "ABSENCE OF SOLIDARITY", WHICH COULD BECOME CATASTROPHIC IF IT WERE NOT ENDED VERY SOON. ARIAS PROMISED SPANIARDS THAT NEW YEAR WOULD NOT BE "OPTIMUM" BUT AT LEAST "NORMAL". END SUMMARY

2. "ABC" (MONARCHIST) PRINTED JAN 12 AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH PREMIER ARIAS NAVARRO WHICH WAS SUBSEQUENTLY PRINTED IN FULL JAN 14 IN OFFICIAL MOVEMENT NEWSPAPER "ARRIBA" AND SUMMARIZED IN OTHER MAJOR DAILIES. THIS IS ARIAS' FIRST PUBLIC STATEMENT SINCE HIS UNPRECEDENTED TV APPEARANCE DEC, 1974 WHEN HE INFORMED SPANIARDS ABOUT DRAFT STATUTE ON POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS, APPEALING FOR SUPPORT OF PROJECT (REF A.) IT IS ONLY HIS SECOND PRESS INTERVIEW SINCE TAKING OFFICE (REF B). IT WAS PRESUMABLY TIMED TO COME AT THE BEGINNING OF YEAR AS A MEANS OF GIVING THE PREMIER AN OPPORTUNITY TO INFORM SPANISH PEOPLE ABOUT HIS VIEWS OF CURRENT SITUATION. THIS IS AN UNUSUAL NEW PROACTICE FOR A SPANISH PREMIER UNDER PRESENT REGIME AS FRANCO HAS ASSUMED PREROGATIVE OF INFORMING SPANISH PEOPLE OF CURRENT SITUATION AT END OF EACH YEAR (MADRID 0011). ARIAS, HOWEVER, IN CONTRAST TO HIS PREDECESSOR CARRERO BLANCO, HAS CAUTIOUSLY BUILT UP A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MEDIA AND MADE HIMSELF FAR MORE ACCESSIBLE. WHEREAS HIS DEC 2, 1974 TV SPEECH HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT THROUGHOUT SPAIN, HIS MOST RECENT INTERVIEW HAS PASSED ALMOST UNNOTICED. MEANWHILE, STATEMENTS OF THREE MILITARY MINISTERS HAVE BEEN WIDELY COMMENTED BY OBSERVERS (MADRID 76).

3. ARIAS OPENED INTERVIEW BY SAYING THAT HE FELT SOME SATISFACTION FOR HAVING CARRIED OUT PROGRAM WHICH HE ANNOUNCED IN HIS INAUGURAL CORTES SPEECH FEB 12, 1974. GOVT, HOWEVER, HAD ONLY MADE FIRST STEP ON A COURSE WHICH WOULD HAVE TO BE COVERED VERY RAPIDLY, HE SAID. THIS FIRST STEP CONSISTED OF ADOPTION OF STATUTE ON ASSOCIATIONS WHICH TOOK EFFECT ON DAY OF INTERVIEW. ASKED ABOUT ESSENTIAL ISSUE CONFRONTING SPAIN, ARIAS QUOTED FRANCO'S RECENT STATEMENT THAT "UNITY AND, WITHIN THIS UNITY, TO PARTICIPATE IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF STRUCTURES" WAS MAIN PREOCCUPATION. WITH RESPECT TO FRANCO HIMSELF, ARIAS SAID LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT HIS HEALTH WAS "NORMAL AND GOOD FOR A MAN OF 82 YEARS" WHO, IN SESSIONS IN SESSIONS OF COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, WAS VERY ACTIVE WITH HIS QUESTIONS AND DEMONSTRATED HIS "EXTRAORDINARY MENTAL LUCIDITY."

4. ARIAS DESCRIBED PRINCE JUAN CARLOS AS A MAN WITH EXCEPTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND MEMORY COMPARABLE TO FRANCO'S. PRINCE ALSO HAD EXCEPTIONAL CAPACITY FOR WORK AND GRASP OF

CURRENT SITUATION, HE ADDED.

5. IN UNUSUAL REFERENCE TO OTHER POLITICAL FIGURES, ARIAS SAID THAT FORMER LABOR MINISTER AND FALANGIST JOSE ANTONIO GIRON DE VELASCO, BECAUSE OF HIS EXCEPTIONAL SERVICES IN PAST, "HAD TO BE ALWAYS A HOPE IN SPAIN'S FUTURE". HE DESCRIBED MANUEL FRAGA IRIBARNE, FORMER INFORMATION MINISTER, AS AN EXCEPTIONAL TALENT WITH AN UNBELIEVABLE CAPACITY FOR WORK WHO ALSO HAD TO BE KEPT IN MIND FOR SPAIN'S FUTURE.

6. ARIAS DESCRIBED THE "OPUS DEI" (LAY CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION) AS AN INSTITUTION WHICH HAD BEEN OF GREAT SERVICE TO THE CHURCH. SECONDLY, ARIAS THOUGHT THAT IT'S WORK WAS TOTALLY OUTSIDE OF POLITICS AND COULD ONLY BE EVALUATED ON IT'S CONTRIBUTION TO RELIGIOUS BELIEF.

7. ARIAS SAID EUROPE, INDEED THE WHOLE WORLD, WAS CONFRONTED BY AN EXTREMELY GRAVE ECONOMIC CRISIS DUE IN PART TO AN ABSENCE OF SOLIDARITY. RICH COUNTRIES WERE ABLE TO SUPPORT EFFECTS OF CRISIS BECAUSE OF THEIR RESERVES WHEREAS THIS WAS NOT POSSIBLE FOR POORER ONES. CRISIS WOULD HAVE TO END SOON, OTHERWISE THERE WOULD BE A REAL CATASTROPHE. IN HIS VIEW WORLD WAS TOO PREOCCUPIED "WITH ITS ALLIANCES THINKING OF A POSSIBLE ATOMIC CONFRONTATION OR A CONVENTIONAL WAR", WHEREAS THE REAL PROBLEMS OF PUBLIC ORDER, MORALITY, FUTURE OF YOUTH, WERE "ONE HUNDRED TIMES MORE IMPORTANT THAN FORMER". IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR NATIONS TO LIVE IN ISOLATION, HE SAID. MOREOVER, IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE IN SPAIN TO CONTROL PRICES OF GOODS BECAUSE SOME WERE ALREADY FIOME WERE ALREADY FIXED BEFORE PRODUCTS REACHED SPAIN; SOME IMPORTED PRODUCTS WERE SOLD BELOW LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COST PRICE BECAUSE IT WOULD HAVE BEEN "IMPOSSIBLE " TO RAISE PRICE.

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8. ARIAS HAD SPECIAL WORD FOR YOUTH WHICH HE SAID WAS OFTENTIMES "RESPONSIBLE AND PROMISING". ARIAS COMPLAINED OF OUTSIDE CURRENTS WHICH INFLUENCED YOUTH'S APPROACH TO LIFE, CITING MOVIES, MAGAZINES AND NOVELS WITH RESPECT TO PROSPECTS IN 1975 ARIAS SAID YEAR COULD BE NORMAL THOUGH NOT BEST. SPAIN HAD PREVIOUSLY KNOWN DIFFICULT YEARS OF ISOLATION, SHORTAGES, AND EVEN AN ABSOLUTE LACK OF RAW MATERIALS. AT THAT TIME EARLIER GENERATIONS HAD KNOWN HOW TO REFLOAT COUNTRY AND, GUIDED BY FRANCO, ESTABLISHED THE BASIS FOR ECONOMIC PROGRESS.

9. COMMENT: BY PAYING SUCH FULSOME TRIBUTE TO FRANCO AND TO A LESSER EXTENT JUAN CARLOS, ARIAS SEEMINGLY HOPED TO COMBAT CONTINUING RUMORS OF DIFFERENCES WITH THEM AND TO SOFTEN ANY POSSIBLE IRRITATION ON CAUDILLO'S PART FOR HIS PRESUMING TO GIVE A NEW YEAR'S STATEMENT (EVEN IF IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FORM OF A PRESS INTERVIEW). THERE HAD BEEN RUMORS IN DECEMBER THAT JUAN CARLOS MIGHT HIMSELF GIVE SOME SORT OF PRESS INTERVIEW OR EVEN MAKE A TV APPEARANCE AT THE BEGINNING OF YEAR BUT APPARENTLY THIS IDEA HAS BEEN ABANDONED. PREROGATIVE OF MAKING A YEAR-END OR NEW YEAR'S STATEMENT HAS HERETOFORE BEEN EXCLUSIVELY RESERVED FOR FRANCO; ARIAS HAS SET A NEW PATTERN BOTH FOR HIMSELF AND HIS

MINISTERS.

10. ARIAS' STATEMENT ABOUT FRANCO'S PHYSICAL CONDITION WAS CLEARLY DESIGNED TO REASSURE SPANIARDS ABOUT HIS RECOVERY, BESIDES INDICATING THAT CAUDILLO WAS STILL EXERCISING REAL LEADERSHIP. HIS DESCRIPTION OF JUAN CARLOS' INTELLECTUAL TALENTS AS BEING COMPARABLE TO EXCEPTIONAL TALENTS OF FRANCO IS UNPRECEDENTED COMPARISON.

11. ANOTHER ARIAS OBJECTIVE WAS SEEMINGLY TO ENCOURAGE FURTHER PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE STATUTE ON POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS ADOPTED AT END OF YEAR. HIS SPECIFIC LAUDATORY REFERENCES TO GIRON AND FRAGA MIGHT BE CONSTRUED AS AFFIRMATION OF HIS OWN NEUTRALITY BETWEEN CONSERVATIVE AND MODERATE FORCES THEY REPRESENT AND AS A REMINDER TO THESE POTENTIAL LEADERS TO ORGANIZE POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS IN CONFORMITY WITH STATUTE. GIRON, OF COURSE, IS ALREADY LEADER OF A LARGE VETERANS ORGANIZATION WHICH HAS DECLINED TO PARTICIPATE AS A POLITICAL ASSOCIATION PER SE. THIS WOULD NOT EXCLUDE GIRON, HOWEVER, FROM SETTING UP A SEPARATE ORGANIZATION. FRAGA ALREADY HAS A "POLITICAL MACHINE" IN BEING AND EXTENSIVE CONTACTS AND COULD FEASIBLY ORGANIZE A POLITICAL ASSOCIATION. HE IS EXPECTED TO RETURN TO MADRID JAN 21 FROM LONDON FOR A FEW DAYS TO DISCUSS POLITICS.

12. BY LIMITING HIS DISCUSSION OF "OPUS DEI" TO THE STRICTLY RELIGIOUS SPHERE, ARIAS HAS IMPLICITLY WITHHELD ANY RECOGNITION WHATSOEVER OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF "OPUS DEI" MEMBERS IN PREVIOUS GOVTS. IN RECENT DISCUSSIONS ABOUT POTENTIAL POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS THERE HAS BEEN NO MENTION IN THE PRESS, OR IN EMBASSY CONTACTS FOR THAT MATTER, OF POSSIBILITY THAT MEMBERS OF "OPUS DEI" MIGHT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ORGANIZE THEIR OWN POLITICAL ASSOCIATION. ARIAS' COMMENTS WOULD SEEM TO BE AIMED AT DISCOURAGING "OPUS DEI" SUPPORTERS FROM SUCH AN INITIATIVE.

13. ARIAS' FRANK COMMENTS ABOUT CURRENT CRITICAL ECONOMIC SITUATION IN EUROPE AND WORLD FOLLOWS PATTERN SET BY FRANCO IN HIS YEAR-END MESSAGE, WHICH WE UNDERSTAND ARIAS DRAFTED. NEITHER LEADER HAS PROMISED SPANIARDS AN EASY YEAR IN 1975. REFERENCES TO AN ABSENCE OF SOLIDARITY AMONG NATIONS AND HARMFUL INFLUENCES FROM ABROAD, HOWEVER, PRESUMABLY ARE DESIGNED TO SHIFT BLAME FOR A SITUATION OVER WHICH SPANIARDS HAVE LITTLE INFLUENCE. EATON

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